

Joint Service Training at Camp Roberts, Ft. Hunter Liggett and Camp San Luis Obispo

ECONOMIC IMPACT: Could reshape SLO economy

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tiveness in combat operations.”
Camp Roberts is already a Power Support Platform that prepares mobilizing troops to transfer to Power Projection Platforms such as Ft. Lewis, Washington where they deploy directly into the theater of operations. A power projection platform, in essence, is one-stop shopping center where units can secure prepare, process and deploy all their war manpower and equipment from one central collection point.

The Joint Training Center concept is a state idea that includes Camp Roberts, Ft. Hunter Liggett and Camp San Luis Obispo. The Joint Training Center would be separate from a power projection platform—in essence a federal concept—in that it will not be part of a mobilization center, but would use the power projection platform training sites to support National Guard training and Joint Services training between the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force. Under this concept, he envisions a triangle where Camp San Luis Obispo is the nerve center for coordinating joint training—or the top of the triangle—the other two corners—or the triangle’s base—are Camp Roberts and Ft. Hunter-Leggett. In the triangle’s center are the Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site (MATES), the U.S. Army’s Satellite Command (SATCOM), supply warehouses, dining facilities, and the Training Support Center.

Camp San Luis Obispo is the schoolhouse for the Officer Candidate School, the Non-commissioned officer course, and several military occupational skill courses, including maintenance, infantry, and several transportation courses. The academic atmosphere and the installation’s eight ranges, two urban war-fighting cities, simulation center, and leadership reaction course offer intriguing possibilities to expand curriculum that keeps pace with the changing nature of warfare and terrorism. “Our schoolhouse, the 223rd Infantry Regiment commanded by Colonel Chris Schnaubelt, is an excellent asset for the California National Guard and we believe equally valuable for the total force,” Kenneally said.

Camp Roberts—the mobilization nerve center—is the triangle’s muscle. It has precious warehouse space for stockpiling and storing equipment, spare parts, and end supply items necessary for creating a “supply store” that plugs into the Army supply system. The post also has five state-of-the-art automated ranges for rifle, pistol, machine-gun, grenade launcher, and hand grenade qualification. Ft. Hunter Liggett completes the triangle’s base. It is owned and managed by the United States Army Reserve, a key partner in the total force. Ft. Hunter Liggett has training maneuver space and tank and Bradley Fighting Vehicle gunnery tables. Collectively, Camp Roberts and Ft. Hunter Liggett have nearly 200,000 acres of Korean-type training terrain where units can train for war or march tactically between the two installations.

The MATES, the triangle’s core, has a broad community of shops and maintenance services that can make a vehicle operational and ready for war under high-pressure deadlines. During a normal year, the MATES maintain about 1,200 tracked and wheeled vehicles and 2,000 pieces of equipment. The MATES has the Controlled Humidity Project (CHP) for maintaining the Abrams tanks’ electrical systems. The CHP is a series of electronic stalls where Abrams hook up to a machine that sucks moisture from the tracked vehicles’ electronic systems, preventing corrosion and

damage. The MATES’s reputation influenced the Army to deploy the 3654th Ordinance Company, Iowa National Guard, to complement the 118-personnel MATES’ force to repair and restore equipment returning from Iraq. “We bring everything up to standards,” said MATES Superintendent LTC Dave Nickels. “Everything that comes through MATES remains here until it meets the Army standards. We take no shortcuts.”

Camp Roberts’ Training Support Center further solidifies the triangular center. The Training Support center creates a virtual combat reality with modern simulators and training aids. Mobilizing soldiers, or National Guard units and troops participating in the joint training program through Camp San Luis Obispo, can practice call for fire, fire an automatic weapon, shoot an M-16, or go into the field and experience the realism of overtaking an enemy, or suffering the consequences of a fatal command decision. The center has enough multiple integrated laser engagement systems (MILES) to equip a brigade, as well as a variety of simulation and classroom tools for sharpening marksmen skills, re-enforcing call for fire drills, practicing Global Positioning System proficiency, or instilling instinctive recognition of various enemy and friendly explosives and weapon systems. “We’ve held 2,000 classes with 20,000 students during the last 80 months,” said Ken Joliff, training instructor. “We know that every edge we can give you is and edge that result in a successful mission on the battlefield.”

With the Army’s Satellite Command, or SATCOM, hidden somewhere inside Camp Roberts’ confines, units can send or receive reports without fear of interception or threats of compromise. “With the satellite links, Camp Roberts could become the most streamlined and secure electronic communications center in the state,” said Lt. Col. Larry Kimmel, deputy commander, Camp Roberts.

Camp Roberts, Camp San Luis Obispo and Ft. Hunter-Liggett have a total of 35 dining facilities, 24 of which are at Camp Roberts. As a Power Support Platform, Camp Roberts has supported as many as 12,000 mobilizing troops in a year since 9-11. The posts’ collective facilities can easily handle five times more than number. The quantity of dining space available also ensures that joint training and mobilization support will not interfere with each other when conducted concurrently. “We do have some pretty good equipment,” said Staff Sergeant Mardell Taylor, manager of the Camp Roberts Mess Facility. “We still have some of the original equipment, but if it lights up, we’ll cook with it.”

With three installations within a 50-mile radius, there is plenty of billeting. Camp Roberts has 4,500 beds. Camp San Luis Obispo has 1,000 and Ft. Hunter-Liggett has 1,400 beds, for a total of nearly 7,000 beds. The number of beds could dramatically rise if money follows the Power Projection Platform to renovate Camp Roberts’ barracks. The installation has already renovated some of the World War II mass-sleeping quarters into a more modern, semi-pri-

vate, sleeping billets. The barrack latrines have been reshaped to include stalls, shower tile, and stainless steel sinks—making them bearable for soldiers training under nearly unbearable field conditions. Field conditions, however, have also improved since the Camp Roberts staff has constructed three new shower points for soldiers to use in the field. The improvements are a good start on what the facility needs to support 60,000 soldiers that could conceivably rotate through the installation if the Army upgrades the installations to a power projection platform. “If we’re upgraded to a power projection platform, funding will most likely follow. When you have a mission, funding generally follows,” said COL Bill Hatch, Camp Roberts Commander.”

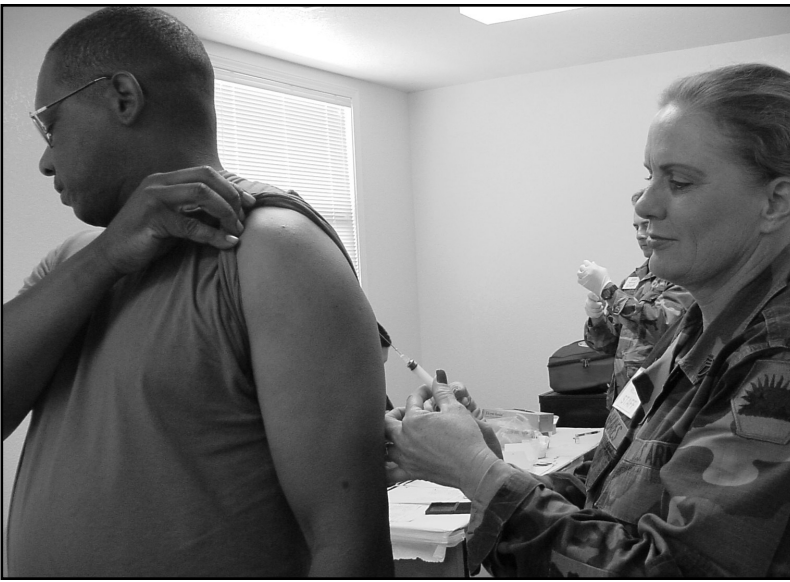
When the Army built Camp Roberts in 1941 and activated Camp San Luis Obispo for the War effort, they found the area’s accessibility appealing, according to author Dan Krieger in his book, “War Comes to the Middle Kingdom.” “Units have unfettered access to the installation,” Hatch said. “Units can reach it by land, air, rail and even sea.” Camp Roberts has vital rail heads that made it possible to support World War II of 436,000 troops and Korean deployments of 300,000 soldiers. The railheads are still used today. The area has numerous landing strips in the immediate vicinity. It is also within reasonable distance of the Oakland ports and are nearby Avila, Moro, and Cambria Bays—major access points for oil tankers and cargo ships during World War II, according to Kreiger. Vandenberg Air Force Base, formally Camp Cook where the 40th Infantry Division trained for Korea, is only 75 miles away and can support the landing of a C-5 Galaxy Cargo Plane. Travis Air Force Base is to the north about 200 miles. The Paso Robles Airport, however, is closer to home and can support a C-5 Galaxy “touch and go,” according Kimmel—which means that the Aircraft can land, offload troops and equipment, take off, but cannot park.

If history is an indicator, then the Paso Robles community might conceivably become involved in creating infrastructure where these giant birds can park. In 1940, Paso Robles worked jointly with the Army to build a flying field where the 40th Infantry Division’s 115th Observation Squadron trained. The city appropriated nearly \$9,000 for site survey, and an additional \$254,346 to purchase an additional 20 acres of land on which they built a 4,200-foot runway. Paso Robles then leased Sherwood Airfield to the Army for \$1 per year. “The North (San Luis Obispo) County residents are behind these installations,” Hatch said. “We talk with the local elected leaders on a consistent basis. They always ask, “What can we do to help?””

Upgrading Camp Roberts and Ft. Hunter Liggett to power projection platform and reshaping Camp San Luis Obispo into a joint training center parallels the history of Pearl Harbor and 9-11. Camp Roberts was created shortly before the United States entered World War II to support massive deploy-



TOP: M-16 range qualifications are part of the Soldier Readiness Processing conducted at Camp Roberts. ABOVE LEFT: Guardsmen and women await their turn to process through the SRP. ABOVE RIGHT: California National Guardsman receives inoculations at the new state-of-the-art SRP Center.



ments. At the same time the Army leased Camp San Luis Obispo from the state to support the war effort. “Camp Roberts and Camp San Luis Obispo were in essence power projection platforms for that era,” Krieger said. “In fact the Army was planning to house a school for special operations at Camp San Luis Obispo to prepare for Operation Olympic—the invasion of Japan.” Another parallel is California’s vulnerability to a foreign threat. Within three weeks of the December 7, 1941 attack, a Japanese submarine sank the U.S. Montebello—an 8,000-ton oil tanker—off the Cambria Coast (roughly 25 miles southwest of Camp Roberts and about 35 miles northwest of Camp San Luis Obispo). West Coast defenses sprang up along California’s coast line and construction and modernization accelerated at Camp Roberts and Camp San Luis Obispo. Within a month of the September 11th, 2001 attacks, California—the world’s 5th largest economy and terrorists’ symbol of decadence—was again the target of foreign threats with terrorists threatening to topple bridges and vocalizing their contempt of Hollywood and the California lifestyle. As was the case following Pearl Harbor, activity at Camp Roberts increased almost immediately after the attacks on the World

Trade Towers and the Pentagon—although not as intensely as after Pearl Harbor. More than 12,000 soldiers rotated through the post on their way to the power projection platform.

In World War II, the country was facing a world wide effort. The nation is again facing a world-wide effort, only this time on multiple fronts as well as on its own soil, in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). A California-based mobilization center and joint service training site supports the broader view of the GWOT as North Korea, according to numerous news accounts, continues to rattle its sabers. Upgrading Camp Roberts and Ft. Hunter Liggett to a power projection platform and multiplying the use of a power projection platform’s improved training sites through a joint serv-

ice training program eliminates a two-stop deployment process and streamlines the Joint Services’ operating efficiency through the creation of a single California-based stronghold with logistical might.

Call Forward 2004 will show the Army whether Camp Roberts and Ft. Hunter Liggett’s infrastructure can support world contingencies, but history created the Central Coast’s framework that can determine its military future. Perhaps Adali Stevenson, chief U.S. representative to the United Nations during the Kennedy Administration, might have agreed when he said, “We can chart our future clearly and wisely only when we know the path which has led to the present.”

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